



# Healthy Mind + Healthy Body = Better Lawyer & Better You

**[Nuts&Bolts]**

*By Jason Flores, Esq.*

**A** new year is upon us and with that comes an assortment of new resolutions, goals, and aspirations for the year to come. Many resolutions and goals revolve around the same common themes of health, love, and money. For many of us, those resolutions tend to last all of three weeks before we return to whatever habit we swore away from. Some of us never even start on our resolutions and procrastinate with sprinkled-in reminders that next week is going to be the week that

we finally start. Then as we all know, work calendars start filling up, life takes over and another year has passed us with so many great intentions and goals that were never met.

I'm here to tell you there is never a better time to begin your journey towards a healthier lifestyle than in the present moment. It all begins with your physical and mental health. Once that foundation is laid, everything else follows naturally. I am certainly no health expert, but one thing I do know is that being an attorney can be stressful and overwhelming. How we choose to manage that stress and the outlets we gravitate toward can literally be the difference between life and death. That is our reality. How we approach the way we handle the stress and challenges of a legal career can do wonders for our life, family, and clients. Most importantly, as studies indicate, you will be happier and

live a longer life which will allow you to be around the people you love.

I have always been fairly active, but I have not always been a lawyer. It was not until I became an attorney and began to run my own practice that I realized the critical and integral part in my overall quality of life and happiness that my lifestyle choices would play. For me, more than ever, that was staying as active as possible, eating the right foods and finding a healthy mental outlet in the form of yoga, martial arts, and meditation. These are all activities and outlets that allow me to deal with one of the primary causes of early death . . . .our old friend stress.

## **DEALING WITH STRESS IN YOUR LEGAL PRACTICE**

One of the first challenges I noticed was the stress I was taking home with me when I became emotionally invested in

my clients' cases. As trial attorneys, we represent clients at the worst time of their lives. Maybe they lost a loved one in a tragic accident, maybe their injuries have left them completely incapacitated or disfigured for the rest of their lives, or maybe they have been wrongfully terminated and are struggling financially. It can be difficult to forget about that at the end of the day. I often put an unhealthy amount of pressure on myself to try and make things right for them. I do not want to continue to do this. On the other hand, I do not want to sacrifice that feeling of empathy that keeps me fighting and motivated to be the best advocate I can be. It is that very passion, after all, that made me want to be a plaintiff's lawyer in the first place and why I feel so blessed to do what I do.

The solution, at least for myself, was finding the balance I needed to keep that passion for my cases and clients while at the same time being able to "leave it at the office." Instead of looking at the emotions I felt in a negative light, I learned to embrace them and direct that energy towards the work I needed to do and the people I needed to help. No matter what type of law you practice you are sure to experience the emotional roller coaster that comes with the work we do. Accept the emotions – good and bad – and become friendly with them. That is, allow yourself to feel them and then use them to your benefit (and your client's). Do not blame yourself for feeling the way you do. You are human after all and feeling sad, angry, frustrated, happy and excited are all normal and healthy emotions.

I also find that the people I surrounded myself with and spend the most time with are critical in helping me let go of stress and better myself overall. Other people's energy can either put us in a better mood or it can have the opposite effect. We all have people in our personal and work lives that can be "energy vampires" – someone who can drain you of your emotional energy and sometimes with the intent to do just that. Being around these

people has an actual impact on your mood and energy.

I am reminded of how my now deceased grandmother (rest her soul) spent the last 20 years of her life talking about her imminent death. My brother and I would fight about who was going to pick up the phone and talk to her first because neither of us wanted to do it. Not because



**Most of us have made our lives about others, be it family, friends or our clients. Make this year about your journey and your transformation to becoming a better, healthier and happier person. Make this a personal journey with your own goals, wishes and desires of how you would like to feel every day. Most importantly, smile when you think about what your journey has in store for you.**



we did not love our grandmother, but because we felt awful after spending 15 minutes on the phone with her listening to her stories about The Reaper. Pay attention to the people you spend time with and notice how you feel when you are around them. You will find that some of those people can energize you, make you feel great

about yourself, motivate and inspire you and just flat out make you happy. Those are the people that you need around you as much as possible if you are going to make changes. On the contrary, you will notice that some people make you feel depressed, discouraged, unmotivated and just angry at everything. I will state the obvious here and say those are the people to avoid.

I understand that for many of us it's simply just difficult to avoid the people that are not necessarily good for our emotional well-being. After all, many of those people could be co-workers, bosses, close friends, and even family members. However, by becoming conscious of the emotions we feel around certain people we are able to at least be mindful of the people who better our lives when we have the ability to make those choices.

#### **MAKE TIME TO BE THE BEST VERSION OF YOU**

By far the biggest reason most people do not make life changes is that they convince themselves that they do not have the time. We work long hours, and we have obligations to organizations, as well as to our families. These are the reasons we use to avoid committing to change. However, if you really take the time to break down your day and what you are doing, I promise you that you will find pockets of time, even if limited, to better yourself.

The misconception is that you need hours of your day to exercise, meditate or do something that will better your mental or physical health. This is just simply not the case. Even a 10-15-minute meditation or 20-minute brisk walk around the block done a few times a week can begin to produce amazing results for your well-being. You can also start by making small changes to your eating habits.

Approximately five years ago I found that I had a slight addiction to energy drinks. I was drinking 2-3 a day – the full-sugar kind. As soon as I was able to swap the energy drinks for water (it took time) I lost about 5 pounds in just a few